



## Macular Degeneration

### What is Age-Related Macular Degeneration (AMD)?

Macular Degeneration is caused by the deterioration of the central portion of the retina. The inside back layer of the eye is responsible for recording the images we see and sending them from the optic nerve to the brain. The retina's central portion, known as the macula, is responsible for focusing central vision in the eye and controls our ability to see in fine detail. When we read, drive a car etc., the macula is processing the information.

### Dry Macular Degeneration

The dry type affects approximately 80-90% of individuals with age-related macular degeneration and progresses more slowly than the wet type. In dry age-related macular degeneration, small white or yellowish deposits, called drusen, form on the retina, beneath the macula, causing it to deteriorate or degenerate over time. AMD typically effects people over 50.

### Wet Macular Degeneration

The wet/neovascular type affects approximately 10-15% of individuals with age-related macular degeneration. In wet age-related macular degeneration, abnormal blood vessels under the retina begin to leak fluid, damaging the macula and causing it to lift and pull away from its base. This can result in rapid and severe loss of central vision.

### Stages of Macular Degeneration

There are three stages of Age-related Macular Degeneration (AMD).

- **Early AMD** – Most people do not experience vision loss in the early stage of AMD. Early AMD is diagnosed by the presence of medium-sized drusen (yellow deposits beneath the retina).

- **Intermediate AMD** – At this stage, there may be some vision loss, but there still may not be noticeable symptoms. A comprehensive eye exam with specific tests will look for larger drusen and/or pigment changes in the retina.
- **Late AMD** – At this final stage, vision loss will be noticeable.

Your optometrist will use a combination of photographs and scans, known as OCT, to diagnosis and watch for progression.

### Treatment

There is currently no cure for AMD. However, there are lifestyle choices that reduce your risk and slow progression. Prevention therefore is most important and lifestyle choices should include:

1. Don't smoke.
2. Maintaining a healthy weight. A BMI of greater than 30 is 2.5 times more likely to develop AMD.
3. Maintain normal blood pressure and control other medical conditions, such as diabetes.
4. Exercise regularly.
5. Eat a nutritious diet that includes green leafy vegetables, brightly colored fruits and berries, and whole grains.
6. Wear sunglasses and hats. Eyewear and contact lenses that provide blue blocking properties may also be helpful.
7. Have an annual eye exam.

Treatment options are currently centered around anti-angiogenic drugs that are injected into the eye. Although a frightful thought, these treatment options have been very successful. Of course, the primary focus should be prevention.